

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

I worked in radio 20 years ago, when the station's public service responsibilities were a significant part of operations. Through public service programming and announcements, we actually contributed to the understanding and education of community members and helped bring people together around issues of importance to the local area. The reality now is painfully different. And nonprofits are hit particularly hard, struggling to stay afloat in our abysmal economy with no help at all from local broadcasters, who behave -- with FCC approval -- as if they have responsibility to their audience at all and owe nothing for their free use of the public's airwaves.

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am also especially disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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